

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BRUSSE 00479 01 OF 02 191140Z  
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8836  
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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 BRUSSELS 0479

CORRECTED COPY (PARA 2 SUB PARA 3)

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: OVIP (MONDALE, WALTER F.) BE EC NATO FR UK IT GW  
SUBJECT: WORKING VISIT OF VICE-PRESIDENT ELECT TO BRUSSELS

REF: BRUSSELS 444

1. PREPARATORY TO JANUARY 24 BREAKFAST MEETING (REFTEL),  
FOLLOWING ARE UPDATED BIO-SKETCHES ON PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS,  
FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE AND THEIR CHEFS DE CABINET:  
JAN GRAULS (TO PRIMIN) AND JEAN-PAUL VAN BELLINGHEN (TO FONMIN):

2. PRIME MINISTER: LEONARD "LEO" TINDEMANS -

LEO TINDEMANS HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY  
SINCE UNIVERSITY DAYS. HE BECOME PRESIDENT OF ITS FLEMISH  
WING (CVP) WHEN THE PARTY DIVIDED IN 1969. A MEMBER OF THE  
LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT SINCE 1961, TINDEMANS SERVED IN  
SEVERAL CABINETS PRIOR TO HIMSELF BECOMING PRIME MINISTER  
APRIL 25, 1974. HE BUILT A SHAKY MINORITY GOVERNMENT INTO  
A MAJORITY COALITION WHICH, HOWEVER VOLATILE (THREE MAJOR  
CABINET CHANGES IN AS MANY YEARS), HAS MANAGED TO SURVIVE.  
TINDEMANS HELD VARIOUS MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS (AGRICULTURE,  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 00479 01 OF 02 191140Z

BUDGET, MIDDLE CLASSES) BUT HIS PRINCIPAL INTERESTS  
HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE. HE  
SERVED AS HIS PARTY'S SPOKESMAN ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND  
HAS OFTEN REPRESENTED THE BELGIAN SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY  
IN INTERNATIONAL CONCLAVES.

TINDEMANS IS A GOOD AND KNOWLEDGEABLE FRIEND OF THE

UNITED STATES. HE ATTENDED THE KISSINGER SEMINAR AT HARVARD IN 1962 AND WAS A FOREIGN LEADER GRANTEE IN MARCH-APRIL 1967. HIS LAST OF SEVERAL VISITS TO THE UNITED STATES WAS IN 1972. IN THE GENERATION OF EUROPEAN LEADERS WHICH EMERGED AFTER THE WAR, TINDEMANS IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST ADVOCATES OF EUROPEAN UNITY AND ATLANTIC COOPERATION. HE SEES A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES AS CRUCIAL TO THE FUTURE OF A UNITED EUROPE. THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY CHARGED HIM IN 1973 TO STUDY WAYS TO RESTORE MOMENTUM TO THE CREATION OF "EUROPE". THE TINDEMANS REPORT, PROJECTED A SERIES OF LIMITED MEASURES - NOTABLY DIRECT ELECTION OF A EUROPEAN PARLAMENT - TO ADVANCE EUROPE'S UNITY. HIS REPORT, REGARDED BY MANY AS TOO AMBITIOUS, IS STILL UNDER STUDY. IN JULY 1976 TINDEMANS WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PEOPLES PARTY, WHICH EXPECTS TO REPRESENT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES FROM SEVEN OF THE NINE EC COUNTRIES (DENMARK AND UK EXCEPTED) IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO BE ELECTED IN 1978.

TINDEMANS AT 54 - AND AFTER THREE YEARS IN POWER - REMAINS THE MOST POPULAR POLITICAL FIGURE IN BELGIUM, APPROVED BY BOTH FLEMISH AND FRANCOPHONES. HIS POLITICAL STYLE IS THAT OF A TEAM LEADER, A CONCILIATOR AND COMPROMISER WHO HAS MANAGED TO HOLD A RICKETY GOVERNMENT COALITION TOGETHER BY AVOIDING SHOWDOWN SITUATIONS. HIS GOVERNMENT MAY WELL SURVIVE UNTIL THE SCHEDULED NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1978. SHOULD IT FALL, HE WOULD CERTAINLY CONTINUE TO FIGURE PROMINENTLY - PERHAPS AS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BRUSSE 00479 01 OF 02 191140Z

PRIME MINISTER AGAIN - IN ANY NEW GOVERNMENT.

TINDEMANS IS EASYGOING AND UNASSUMING IN MANNER. HE HAS A PLEASING, IF NOT A PARTICULARLY DYNAMIC, PERSONALITY. IN ADDITION TO HIS NATIVE DUTCH, HE SPEAKS FLUENT FRENCH AND ENGLISH, AND SOME GERMAN. A ROMAN CATHOLIC NATIVE OF ANTWERP, TINDEMANS MARRIED A HOMETOWN GIRL, THE FORMER ROSA NAESSEN, IN 1960. THEY HAVE FOUR CHILDREN.

3. MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: RENSAT VAN ELSLANDE -

RENAAT VAN ELSLAND, 61 YEARS OLD, A PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE FLEMISH (CVP) WING OF THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY, BECAME MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE LEBURTON COALITION GOVERNMENT FORMED IN 1973. HE WAS RETAINED IN THIS POST IN THE TINDEMANS GOVERNMENT FORMED IN APRIL 1974. VAN ELSLANDE, A VETERAN OF SEVERAL CABINET

POSTS, IS BLEGUM'S FIRST FLEMISH FOREIGN MINISTER.

VAN ELSLANDE SPEAKS SEVERAL LANGUAGES, INCLUDING FAIR ENGLISH. IN ADDITION TO HIS NATIVE DUTCH. HIS EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS HAS BEEN LARGELY CONFINED TO DOMESTIC ISSUES - PARTICULARLY FLANDERS CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ASPIRATIONS. IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HE HAS RELIED HEAVILY ON CAREER STAFF. DURING HIS TENURE, BELGIAN FOREIGN POLICY HAS BEEN MADE PRIMARILY BY PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS AND ETIENNE DAVIGNON, UNTIL RECENTLY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS.

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 00479 02 OF 02 181605Z  
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OC-06 OPR-02 CCO-00 DODE-00 EURE-00 /047 W  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRUSSELS 0479

OF LATE VAN ELSLANDE HAS INDICATED GRATER SUBSTANTIVE INTEREST IN POLICY MATTERS, WHICH HAS BEE MANIFESTED IN RISING ENTHUSIASM FOR IMPROVED BELGIAN RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE IN THE CONTEXT OF EAST-WEST DETENTE. VAN ELSLANDE'S REMARKS DURING AN EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECH ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN PARLIAMENT IN DECEMBER 1976 WERE NEVER PRINTED IN THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL - REPORTEDLY BECAUSE THEY MIS-REPRESENTED TINDEMANS VIEWS REGARDING ACCOMMODATION WITH THE SOVIET BLOC.

BEFORE HIS ELECTION TO THE LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT IN 1949, VAN ELSALANDE PRACTICED AS AN ATTORNEY IN BURSSELS. HE ALSO SERVED AS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF A DUTCH LANGUAGE WEEKLY (1945-1947), AND HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION AND MIDDLE-CLASS POLITICS. VAN ELSLANDE MARRIED CHISLAINNE VAN ACKER IN 1945. SHE

IS A PRACTICING PHARMACIST. THEY HAVE ONE SON AND THREE DAUGHTERS. TWO OF HIS BROTHERS ARE ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS. THE MINISTER ENJOYS BRIDGE, AMERICAN AUTOMOBILES AND VACATIONS IN SPAIN. HE IS A TALL, LANKY MAN, GOOD-HUMORED AND EASYGOING, OF MODEST INTELLECTUAL ATTAINMENTS.

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 00479 02 OF 02 181605Z

4. CHEF DE CABINET OF THE PRIME MINISTER: JAN GRAULS - GRAULS, 65 YEARS OLD, IS ONE OF BELGIUM'S MOST SENIOR CAREER CIVIL SERVANTS. HE HAS BEEN CHIEF OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S CABINET SINCE 1959, SERVING SIX DIFFERENT PRIME MINISTERS.

THE MINISTERIAL CABINET SYSTEM, AS PRACTICED IN BELGIUM, PROVIDES A PERSONAL STAFF OF UP TO A DOZEN OFFICERS TO ASSIST A MINISTER IN EXECUTING HIS RESPONSIBILITIES. NORMALLY MOST OF A CABINET CONSISTS OF CAREER CIVIL SERVANTS. SPEAKING IN THE NAME OF A MINISTER, HOWEVER, SOME EXERCISE IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON POLICY DECISIONS.

GRAULS IS AN UNOBTRUSIVE, STAFFMAN TYPE, BUT HIS EXPERIENCE, MASTERY OF DETAIL AND FLEMISH BACKGROUND GIVE HIM IMPORTANT PERSONAL INFLUENCE WITH TINDEMANS. HIS ENGLISH IS GOOD.

5. CHEF DE CABINET OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER: JEAN-PAUL VAN BELLINGHEN -

VAN BELLINGHEN, 51 YEARS OLD, IS A SENIOR CAREER DIPLOMAT WITH EXTENSIVE SERVICE ABROAD, INCLUDING WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK (BELGIAN U.N. DELEGATION).

PARTICULARLY SINCE THE DEPARTURE OF DAVIGNON FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, HE IS THE PROFESSIONAL GUIDING HAND FOR FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE. VAN BELLINGHEN IS BRIGHT, PERSONABLE AND AMBITIOUS. APART FROM TINDEMANS, HE WILL BE - WITH RESPECT TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS - THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE AND SOPHISTICATED BELGIAN PRESENT. FIRESTONE

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